

THE ADMIRAL'S DAUGHTERS.

A STORY OF FIFTY YEARS AGO, IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. BY A. STEWART HARRISON.



CHAPTER I.

"WHOM do you think I've seen to-day, Ellen?"

"Who? How can I tell? Dozens of people, I suppose."

"But it was some one you know and like."

"Mrs. Lake?"

"Yes. Susan and I met her on the Hoe and who do you think was with her?"

"Captain Boyd?"

"No. Oh, you'll never guess! It was papa. They looked so confused; but she soon recovered, and asked papa whether he was not proud of two

such fine girls. Papa said that he thought there was one still more handsome at home. Mrs. Lake laughed, and said she knew his opinions on that point."

"You do surprise me—Mrs. Lake with papa! I can hardly believe it. Where are they now—coming here?"

"No. Papa told us to come home, and he would come to dinner after seeing Mrs. Lake home."

"I'm afraid my widow friend is going to bring us some trouble, Mary," said Ellen, ignoring the fact of Susan's presence, as did everybody else in that house.

"Trouble!—what trouble? She'll be only one more to dinner on Wednesday."

"No, no, Mary; I'm afraid she's likely to be the one more at dinner every day soon."

"Why? Do you think papa will ask her often?"

"Stupid child! She's a widow, and will only need asking once when the question is put by an admiral."

"What question, Ellen? Do speak clearly."

"Why, the question that you hope will some day be put to you by that handsome Lieutenant Blackwood."

"Ellen, that's not kind. I never said that I wanted any one to put such a question to me—least of all, that solemn, sedate Mr. Blackwood. But, surely, you don't mean that my papa is likely to ask Mrs. Lake to be his wife?"

"I do, indeed. I've wondered what took him out so much of an evening for the last three weeks—indeed, ever since she came here—while you girls were out. Your meeting them together explains all; you'll have a stepmother, girls, as sure as my name's Ellen Newton."

"What do you say to that, Susan?" said Mary.

"I'm sure I don't know. She's a very pretty woman, and was very kind in her manner to us to-day. I dare say papa will be happier if he marries her."

"Ah!" said both the other girls, looking at each other, and reading each in the other's face a profound pity for poor Susan, for whom the idea of a stepmother had no terrors. "You'd like it, too, Susan?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. If she's kind and pleasant, perhaps I should. I don't think we girls can be quite the same to papa as a wife. I wonder what Henry will say when he hears of it?"

"That's Susan all over," said Ellen. "I wonder what Henry will say!"

The three girls left the room to dress for dinner, and Susan having been told to make haste down so as to be there when their father came in, the two girls, the eldest and youngest of the admiral's family, were left alone.

"I wish you wouldn't say anything about Lieutenant Blackwood, Ellen; he's not been here half a dozen times, and you're always teasing me about him. I don't care—"

"How old are you, Mary—twenty, I believe?"

"Yes."

"And I am twenty-six. You see that makes

all the difference. I see—you don't. A woman learns a great deal from twenty to twenty-six."

"Whatever you've learnt, you mustn't do this. I don't like it."

"And why? Didn't I joke about Captain Boyd and Colonel Griffin, and I don't know how many more? You never winced then—you did not feel; you joked yourself about those admirers; but now you do feel when I joke you about Mr. Blackwood: therefore, being six years older than my little sister, I say she has thought how pleasant it would be if— There, Mary, I need not picture the future for you; I'll end here. About papa, though, I don't know what to do; he's fifty-six in April, and to marry at his time of life it's very absurd, and such a girl as Mrs. Lake! Why she was at school with me before she married Captain Lake—she's not thirty yet. I little thought what I was about when I asked her to come and stay with me the week you girls were in London. Good use of her time she has made, too, to get your papa to walk with her on the Hoe already."

"But we must do something to prevent it," said Mary, suggestively.

"I don't know what we can do; we can say something, but it will be no use—none. Mrs. Lake's a very pleasant companion, but I can't think of her being here in authority without some fear. You girls will marry and go away, but an old thing like me there's no hope for."

"Don't talk so, Ellen, I don't like it. Papa said, to-day, you were the handsomest of us all."

"My tongue's too sharp a great deal, Polly, and a step-mamma will give it a keener edge; so I say Good-bye to hope for myself, but I mean to take better care of you helpless little chicks."

"If you please, Miss, master says will you come down—Mrs. Lake is in the drawing-room."

"Say I'll come directly, Fanny. There, Mary, I told you so. They're going to confess to me; you and Susan are of no account in these matters—children—poor children!"

And here Ellen clasped her sister in her arms, and kissed her passionately.

"Let us go together, Nelly."

"Oh, certainly! and be told to go away like a child."

"Papa won't do that."

"Very well—let's try, then."

"I know I shall say something spiteful, Mary; you'd better go away, and let me go in alone."

"No, Ellen, we'll go together. Wipe your eyes, dear, don't let her see you've been crying."

And, just outside the drawing-room door, Mary wipes her sister's eyes and smooths her hair, and they enter together.

"Mary, I sent for Ellen; you can retire."

And exit Mary, painfully red and indignant; for the admiral, good man as he was, rather gave in to a way of speaking that commanded obedience. It is a way that saves its possessor a great deal of trouble, albeit it is marvellously unpleasant to those who are its victims. Mary felt that her power against the new-comer was gone altogether already—if fight there was to be, her father's favourite, Ellen, and Mrs. Lake would be the only combatants.

Let us leave Mary with her hand on the outside handle of the door, doubtful whether to go, or to do something dreadful, she knew not what, to relieve herself of the anger that burnt within her.

"Ellen, my dear," says the white-haired old gentleman, standing with his back to the fire, "your sisters met Mrs. Lake and myself on the Hoe this morning; it's necessary that I should explain to you that I have asked Mrs. Lake to become a mother to your children, and she has most kindly consented. I trust your own good sense will enable you to see that this lady's kindness should meet its reward in the respect and affection of her adopted daughters—ahem—"

This pretty little speech had been drilled into the admiral during the walk to his own home. He had said his lesson well, and, that finished, felt at a loss what more to say.

"My dearest Ellen," said the lady, "your dear father is quite right, he has persuaded me to come and live with you dear girls and take care of his motherless children—not that I mean to say that is my only reason for yielding to his wishes."

And the little black eyes shot a glance of tenderness at the admiral.

"If it were your only reason, Mrs. Lake, it would be a poor one. I've brought those children up; since their mother died I've been their mother; and I've yet to learn that they wish another's care, even though it came accompanied by Mrs. Lake's large experience."

"I can't boast much experience, Ellen, my love, but I think you as well as your sisters have now reached an age when my experience, little as it is, might be of service to your father in looking after your interests. No one knows the dangers to which you are exposed from your father's public position. Several friends have remarked to your father that he ought to have some person of experience at the head of his establishment; and I feel that, to please my dear Richard, I will do my very best."

And again the black eyes shed their melting beams.

"I don't see that my father's friends have anything to do with it. I have kept my father's house since I was fifteen, and I do not see that I should be called upon to give up that pleasure to anyone."

"My dearest Ellen, how much you mistake me and my meaning. I hope that when I am one of the family, things will go on just as they have hitherto; you will be able still to devote yourself to the little arrangements which the care of your younger sisters requires. We shall be very happy, dear Ellen, I'm sure—quite a united household—shall we not, my dear Richard?"

Ellen was stupid with surprise at hearing anyone call her father "dear Richard;" it was profanation—it was—What would not that woman be capable of, if she called her father—Admiral Newton!—"dear Richard?" Could anything be sacred to that creature after this? She knew she was stupid, felt that her mind was stunned. What could she do? Beaten and distracted, she rushed from the room to find solace in tears. Poor Ellen! all your motherly loving offices taken

from you by one of your own schoolfellows not four years your senior.

"My dear Admiral, you might have come to the rescue, I think, might you not, when that fine frigate of yours bore down on me in that threatening way. Well, never mind, I'll beat them all off yet, won't I, dear?"

"I think, Mrs. Lake, you should have been a little more kind to the poor child; she, naturally enough, does not like to see a successor to the post she has held so long. I hope you'll do your best, Catherine, to be friendly with them."

"Never fear, Admiral, I'm sure they'll learn to love me when they know me—don't you think so, dear?"

"I hope so—I'm sure I hope so."

"Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I think so, if you are careful with them. Ellen is very jealous of any interference with her sisters; but I think they'll learn to love you, in time," said the admiral, reflecting; "in time, yes—"

"As you do, dear?"

"O yes, my dear Catherine, as I do."

"Ah, my dearest Richard, nothing but the consciousness of your great love for me would induce me to accept the responsibilities of my position. A few weeks ago I was free and gay, and now I am almost sad with my new cares; but I have that consolation, that my dearest Richard loves me with all his heart—does he not, dearest?" And the affectionate widow kissed the man, old enough to be her father, with great and girlish enthusiasm.

"Let us go to dinner, my dear Catherine," said the gentleman; and they went to dinner.

Why did Admiral Newton call this affectionate lady "my dear Catherine?"

* * * * *

Miss Bates was the daughter of a lieutenant who lived on his half-pay, at Portsmouth. Miss Bates left a fashionable boarding-school, to which a relative of the family had sent her, very much dissatisfied with the name of Bates—it was common, and she would change it as soon as she could. Her mother had an equal desire as to the change of name, but not for similar reasons: Miss Bates was a very expensive addition to her household. What with the lodgers and her son, Mr. Bates, junior, then at the interesting age of twelve, she found it difficult to make both ends meet, and, like a wise woman, she set herself to work to accomplish the modern mother's mission, and get her daughter well married. This done, she might then give Mr. Bates, junior, an education befitting his great abilities.

Her first thought was her lodgers. Was there anyone eligible for the honour of her daughter's hand? None at present, but there might be: it must be a consideration in taking the next tenant into the first floor suite. If she could get an eligible into her first floor, it was hard, indeed, if she could not get that eligible to make her daughter an offer.

In a few days an advertisement in the local paper announced that an elegant suite of apartments would be vacant after the next quarter-day. "Applications might be addressed to Mrs. Bates,

No. 2, Prospect Row. Unexceptionable references will be given and required."

There was still a fortnight to quarter-day. Concerts, exhibitions, parades, sermons, fancy fairs, and sailing parties were all brought into requisition. Wherever there were assemblies of people, there was Mrs. Bates, and there was Miss Bates, the loftiest of the lofty, the highest of the high—ostensibly, if not in fact.

Who was that exquisite little fairy, with the black eyes and the haughty look? Who, indeed?

Before the fortnight was over, Mrs. Bates had forty-three written, and nine personal applications, for her apartments. The nine personal were immediately snubbed. The advertisement said, applications "might be addressed:" Mrs. Bates regretted to have to call applicant's attention to that fact. The forty-three letters were sorted and most carefully analysed: twenty were unworthy of consideration, mates and merchant captains, men of no family, or youths; eleven ensigns and second lieutenants might be reserved for consideration in the future; nine should have immediate attention; two military captains and one major received polite intimations that Mrs. Bates was sorry to have to refuse their offers, but she had always been in the habit of receiving gentlemen of the other service, and felt unequal to the task of, &c., &c.

"Naval men are much more impressionable, my dear," said Mrs. Bates, in explanation. "Soldiers are such practised and successful flirts that I fear them; sailors, on the contrary, are much more susceptible and generous: that blue silk of mine and the black shawl were presents from Captain Fitzroy before he had stayed with us a fortnight."

Nine gentlemen were desirous of the shelter of the first floor; which should it be? In other days the highest price was the only consideration; now she must be guided by other circumstances. Pretty thing indeed to get a married man in, who might pay his three guineas a-week for years. No: the lodger must be single—a sailor, of good family or expectations, and for Catherine's ideas, of good name. Which of the nine?

Mr. Brownson must be asked to tea; he knew every body, and every thing, in and about Portsmouth; he was something at the dockyard, nobody seemed to know what; he had a little office, where he read the "Times" and the magazines diligently from ten till four, and then left—an employment for which it is said many gentlemen in government offices get well paid.

Mr. Brownson should come; Mrs. Bates had said it. Catherine walked down to the office with the invitation, and Mr. Brownson came. He looked at the letters, made a note of the names, and came next evening, full of information.

No. 1. Captain Jenkins, risen from the ranks; nothing but his pay; rather dissipated.

No. 2. First-lieutenant Broadmead, scapegrace, of good family; awfully in debt; has a latchkey, and is seen in the streets very early in the mornings.

Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Varieties of the same species.

No. 8. Captain Allerton, good family; three

steps from a peerage; ship fitting out, to be ready in six months, more or less, as soon as men can be got for her.

No. 9. Captain Lake, good family; allowance of £500 a-year from an uncle; heir to the uncle; quiet, reserved, young, just passed, and just come home from a long voyage.

"I think it must be Captain Lake, Mr. Brownson," said Mrs. Bates. Mr. Brownson agreed. He always agreed with everybody. He had no opinions of his own, he was simply a storehouse of facts.

"Allerton is a very pretty name, mamma."

"I think 'Lake' is as pretty, Kate; so suggestive of peacefulness and calm. I remember the lakes in the North, my dear, when your father and I—ah well! I must not think of that now."

Captain Lake was the happy man. For him the suite on the first floor was put into thorough order; for him new white curtains were put up to the mahogany four-post bedstead; for him were purchased a new bottle and glass for the toilet stand; in short, for him was done everything that should be done for a new lodger who had £500 a-year allowed him by his uncle.

Why delay? Mrs. Bates is energetic—Miss Bates is dissatisfied with the name of Bates; Captain Lake is on the first floor; he must come down stairs to go out; Miss Bates must go upstairs to get to the upper part of the house; Mr. Lake sees Miss Bates once, twice, thrice, many times.

Two months pass; the servant is ill—Mr. Lake must have his breakfast, somebody must take it; the knifeboy is dirty; Catherine is ready; Catherine must run up with it. The servant gets well; she does nothing that is right; a complaint brings Miss Bates to investigate: the toast is burnt—Betty can't help it, the fire is so bad in the kitchen—good fire here—Miss Bates will make the toast; Betty will fetch the loaf.

Charming picture, Catherine making toast, kneeling—impressionable Captain in easy chair, reading. She likes making toast? Yes—anything for those she loves is pleasure. Can she?—the toast is in the ashes—Can she love? She can—she does—oh, happiness!

"My dear Catherine, what has made you so—Mr. Lake, leave my house. Oh! that I should come to this,—leave my house this moment, sir."

"Madam, allow me to explain."

"No explanations, sir, can possibly affect me. Oh, miserable woman that I am—"

"Madam, indeed you are wrong. Pray allow me to explain."

"Yes, mother, do hear him, I implore you."

Mr. Lake explained; Mrs. Bates was pacified; and Miss Bates changed her name and residence before the next quarter-day.

They were very happy—that is Mrs. Lake and her mamma were—till Captain Lake went to the West Indies and there died.

"He was a good man, a dear good man," said Mrs. Bates, "but if anything, a little too soft."

Mrs. Lake was not necessarily the heir to the loving uncle because her husband had been: Mrs. Lake, the wife, had £500 a-year to spend; Mrs. Lake, the widow, had but £100 for the same

purpose, and she felt the difference; but if elderly gentlemen, who are admirals, will meet charming 'captains' widows at dinner-parties, they must run the risk of such meetings.

Admiral Newton met Mrs. Lake first at his own house, then at his friend's.

At home he was safe. Why did he go to Colonel Griffin's? Why did he take so much champagne that evening? Why did he get himself appointed the charming widow's escort home, that unhappy night? Why did he pledge himself her most devoted admirer? Why did he plight his troth, and listen with rapt attention to her declaration that of all men in the world she admired him most, and loved him from the first moment his dearest Ellen introduced him to her? Why did he do this?

Why, but because he was fifty-six and fond of champagne, and she was thirty and wanted more than £100 a-year to satisfy her desires.

Why, too, on the next evening did Mrs. Lake's servant rush into the room, without warning of any kind, and find the admiral's arm round her mistress's waist, and then make a blundering apology by saying she did not know any one was there? Ah why, indeed, were these things so; but because £100 a-year is not easy to live upon, and champagne is strong, while man is weak.

Why did Admiral Newton say "My dear Catherine," and propose going down to dinner?

Why, indeed, but because the effect of champagne is transient.

CHAPTER II.

DINNER is over—bed time, that time of confidence amongst sisters, has come.

"What do you think of her now, Mary?"

"I don't know; she's like a rat, although she is so pretty, with her black hair and red cheeks; there's a sly look about her I can't like, and when she calls papa 'Dearest Richard,' I feel ready to fly at her."

"I'm sure she's very affectionate and kind," put in Susan. "She talked to me a long time, asked me all sorts of questions, and seemed quite interested about the house and the servants, and even asked me how much we spent in housekeeping. I think I shall like her."

"There now, Ellen, you see she's pumped poor Susan of all that she knows, as father would say. I'm sure she's sly, and I don't believe she loves papa a bit as we do."

"You heard her ask papa if she should come and help us on Tuesday for the dinner on Wednesday; such impertinence, as if I couldn't see to the monthly dinner as well now as ever."

"Did you say anything, Ellen?"

"I told her, point blank, I did not need help."

"And she?"

"She said, 'O, Ellen, dearest, I am so glad I shall be able to leave all these things to your care.' I know I shall hate her—I know I shall. Why did I invite her here at all?"

"Well, we must make the best of it, Nelly, and try what kindness will do: some people are more influenced by it than by anything else. I hope—"

"You hope in vain, Mary; she's not one—I know

it. As an acquaintance, I did not think enough of her to notice little things; but now, old school days and things come back to me, and I'm sure we shall all suffer dreadfully through her—even father will. She'll never be satisfied till we all kiss her feet; and I won't, if I die for it."

"There, Ellen, don't think anything more about it. Let us go to bed. There, open the door, there's Winks scratching."

Winks was a fine white Persian cat, an especial favourite of Ellen, and slept like a great hairy baby in her bed—another proof she was cut out for an old maid, as she used to remark with a grim smile occasionally.

Wednesday was the admiral's monthly dinner to the various officers, naval and military, in the neighbourhood; and duly on Wednesday they arrived, some twenty or twenty-five, with a sprinkling of wives and daughters.

The widow sat next to the admiral, on his right. A grim old warrior cut up a turkey, in a sort of broadsword-exercise style, for Ellen. Lieutenant Blackwood was at Mary's left. The dinner, like other dinners, was eaten almost in silence; with the dessert came the chatter. The widow lighted up and told funny stories; Ellen sat grim as a heraldic tigress; while Mary seemed wholly absorbed in some very interesting details of something not generally audible, which was in process of narration by the lieutenant; Susan was, as usual, silent, and crushed by two vigorous sea worthies, who talked and disputed across her with a total obliviousness of her presence. Somehow, in spite of the widow's gaiety, the thing did not "go off." The host was constrained and dull, not to say fidgety, and his friends felt it. He was better when the ladies left; better when the health of his daughters was drunk with enthusiasm; better still when pressed for the story of "The little gentleman in the brown coat," which he told at once.

"You see, gentlemen, my story begins in 1779. I was at that time about five-and-twenty, and only second lieutenant of the Bosphorus. We were lying in the Roads with the anchors tript, and the sails loose, waiting the signal for sailing, when a shore boat came off with a little gentleman in a brown coat in the stern. He came on board, went into the cabin and saw the captain. In about ten minutes the order came to furl sails and pay out the cable, for we were not going to sail that day. Half an hour after he came out of the cabin, and the gig was lowered to take him ashore. Hopkins was sent in charge: he was midshipman then. The old gentleman was rather slow in getting down the ship's side, and had just got his foot on the boat's gunwale when Hopkins gave the word—'Shove off there—give way lads,' and the jerk threw the old fellow into the water. I saw it as I looked over the side, and tumbled over to pick him up, for he was going down like a shot. They took us on board, and he went to bed while his clothes were sent for. They came in about three hours, and, as he was going over the side, he said to Hopkins:

"'Pray what's your name, sir?'"

"Hopkins told him, and he wrote it down on the back of a letter, and then asked me mine."

"Richard Newton, sir, at your service," said I.

"Richard Newton," said he, as he wrote, 'Mr. Richard Newton, I'm much obliged to you, sir; I shall not forget you. Good day, sir!'

"I took an opportunity to ask the captain who he was. He didn't know—

"Some messenger from the Admiralty—some fuss about stores brought him from London."

"The men joked me after we sailed about my 'bath' as they called it, and offered to buy my chance of the old man's favour. And now comes the singular part of my story, gentlemen; from that day to this I never saw the little gentleman in the brown coat again, and I don't know his name; and yet every commission I have had, every step of promotion I have gained, must have come through him, for I had no friend or patron who had the slightest influence with the Lords, and yet there never was a more rapid rise than mine. He did it all, and that, too, without giving me the slightest chance of thanking him, for, as I said, I have no idea, to this very day, who or what he was."

"And Hopkins?" inquired one of the guests.

"Died six years ago, a second lieutenant, for spite of all his friends he could get no higher. So, gentlemen, we'll drink one more health, 'The little gentleman in the brown coat.'"

The story did the admiral good, and he was quite himself again, till that unfortunate Major Simpkins rose to propose the health of a lady, one whom he had known for a long time, one who, by her beauty and her wit, was worthy of that higher station in society that rumour said she would shortly be called upon to fill—he begged to propose the health of Mrs. Lake, and he might, he thought, venture to call on their worthy host to return thanks. Then was the admiral dull; then did he, at one fell draught, drink down the conviction of his folly, and return thanks in a speech of almost boyish enthusiasm, concluding with the public announcement of his approaching happiness. Then did the two-bottle and three-bottle men gather round him, and while the half-bottle men joined the ladies, did they sit long and drink deeply.

Why did he stay? Why call for more? Mrs. Lake's surmise must have been right—he was drinking her health over again.

In the drawing-room are the half-bottle men and the ladies, holding a revel with tea, coffee, biscuits, and duets, as the consumables. Mary still finds that Lieutenant Blackwood's conversation is intensely interesting; he is a grave, reserved, young-looking man of five-and-twenty, with eyes of a singularly changeable expression, and a dreamy, yet not vacant look; a species of staring into himself was his failing, when not actually talking to any one; "the look is almost poetic in its soft melancholy" (so at least Mary writes to her dearest friend); he is tall and broad shouldered, with a slight student-like stoop; he will read so much—he should not, if it will injure his health. He will introduce his sisters, they will be so glad to know Miss Newton and her sisters. Her sister is rather eccentric, he says.

O yes, she is rather, but the warmest hearted creature that ever breathed; she has been a mother to them all—even Henry minds her, cares for her. Henry is a medical student; are they as wild as she hears they are? does he know? He does not; he would like to know Henry; he will call on him in London; and so on, and so on, till it's time to leave. Alas, time to make the eyes look more melancholy than ever! As he takes his leave, "Is Miss Newton going to the launch to-morrow week?" "Yes." Singular, his sisters and his mother are going too; they will meet, most likely, and so farewell.

Mary thinks the evening one of the pleasantest she has spent for a long time, and exhibits a tendency, while doing her hair, to linger and stare vacantly at the opposite wall, where she appears to see something that requires attentive examination, which perhaps it does, though it may not be on the wall after all.

The widow sleeps at the admiral's, and bids the girls "good night" with such kind patronage that they are ready to scream, except Susan, who goes with her to her room, there to be squeezed, like a sponge, of all the family affairs of which she has any knowledge.

Winks must have wondered what was the matter with his mistress, for without so much as a single stroke of his soft fur she buries her head on her sister's bosom and cries herself to sleep. Poor Winks! How much cats and women suffer in this world!

The launch came off after a week, during which Mr. Blackwood had been almost a constant visitor; Mary was introduced to Mrs. Blackwood and her daughters.

Why were the sisters such dear nice girls? Why was the mamma such a sweet woman? Eh, Mary? confess. No need, Mary, we know, perhaps, as well, if not better, than you can tell us. But why does Mrs. Blackwood seem as if she were determined at any risk to prevent her son speaking to Mary; why does she talk incessantly—eagerly; why command her son's escort home? That, we, as well as Mary, leave to time. And yet spite of all this, let it be said that when Mary reached home that night she had been asked if she could love him, and had confessed that she could and did. Mary had not much sleep that night, neither had her "Ellis," as she called him to herself again and again.

When the lieutenant reached home he found his mother sitting up for him, a rare thing. They were on the best of terms,—he called her, somewhat disrespectfully, "the old lady," but the tone quite libelled the words, there was an intensity of affection between the two that could be seen at the slightest glance.

"What, you up, old lady! What's the matter? I must take a pill after to-day's excitement—is that it?"

"I am not in the mood for joking, Ellis; I want to talk very seriously to you."

"Say on, mother, I'm all attention."

"Now, Ellis, how far have you gone with Miss Newton?"

"How far?" said Ellis, almost blushing, certainly stammering and hesitating.

"Yes, Ellis, how far?"

"Why, mother—I asked her to be mine."

"My God, Ellis! you don't mean that. I am too cruelly punished."

"What do you mean, mother? I do mean that I am engaged to Miss Newton, and that this night she has promised to be my wife. Do you know anything against her, mother?"

"Nothing, Ellis, nothing. She is as good as an angel can be."

His mother was rocking herself to and fro in her chair, with her hands before her face, as she almost groaned:

"Oh! If you had but spoken to me, I could, perhaps, have saved you this—and her—poor thing—"

"Mother, you make me feel mad with anger and suspense—I entreat you tell me what you mean?"

He was kneeling, now, and trying to take his mother's hands from before her face; she yielded, and looked into his with dry tearless eyes and a haggard smile that chilled him to the heart.

"I cannot tell you more than this, Ellis, that Miss Newton must never be your wife."

"Mother, either you or I are going mad; you say you know nothing against her, and yet you say she cannot be my wife. Why not, I ask? Why not, I ask?" and he almost screamed his questions.

"For God's sake be calm, Ellis!"

"Yes, yes, mother; but why not?" and he pressed his hands to his temples, and strode about the room in agony.

"I cannot tell you, Ellis; indeed I cannot—dare not."

"Now, mother, be reasonable, and answer me," and he took her hands in his, and held them as in a vice. "Why cannot Miss Newton be my wife? She is good; well born; has some little portion. What more do you want? I am satisfied; surely you—"

"Oh, Ellis! you hold me too tightly, I am in pain. Forgive me, my dear boy; but I cannot tell you."

"What then shall I do, mother? Come, guide me, for I feel that I am stupified, and incapable of thought for myself. If you cannot tell me, who can?"

"That I will tell you, Ellis, if you will make me a promise to do what I ask—a faithful promise."

"My dear mother, I will promise anything, but to give her up."

"I will not ask you to do that, but I will ask you not to see her again for a week, nor even to write."

"I promise for a whole week, neither to see her, write to her, nor send her any message. Are you satisfied?"

"Not yet; you want to know why you cannot marry her?"

"I do, and therefore make these promises."

"Then go to bed now, and come to me to-morrow morning at seven for a letter to my agent in London; take that to him, and he will tell you what I cannot tell you. Now, good night, Ellis,

and forgive me if, having been once young myself, I say remember your promise."

How could any man sleep after such an interview as this?

(To be continued.)

THE ADMIRAL'S DAUGHTERS.

A STORY OF FIFTY YEARS AGO, IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. BY A. STEWART HARRISON.



CHAPTER III.

At seven o'clock Lieutenant Blackwood rose, and having obtained the letter started at once for London.

Arrived there, his mother's agent and solicitor was soon found. The letter seemed to disturb him greatly.

"I fear I can't manage this matter for you to-day," he said, after some hesitation.

"It's necessary that some documents not in my possession now should be seen by you, in respect to the statement your mother wishes me to make. I must see the party who has them, but if you like to wait here I'll send my clerk to arrange an interview with him. This, you see, is an enclosure to him from Mrs. Blackwood."

He waited while the old gentleman wrote a letter and sent his clerk. In about half an hour the clerk came back with a gentleman.

"Oh, Mr. Stephen! it was your father I wanted to see."

"I know it, but he could not come; he is much too unwell to attend to business."

"Step into my room, will you? Excuse us, Mr. Blackwood, a few minutes."

The two gentlemen conferred, and Mr. Harrild sent to ask him to come in.

"This is Mr. Stephen—or, as he is sometimes called, Dr. Stephen—Mr. Blackwood. Now his father is the person of whom I spoke as possessing the papers, and it will be necessary to go to his house, some few miles from here, and he can't be seen till to-morrow."

"You know the nature of the matter in question, Mr. Harrild?"

"Not quite; but still I make a guess from the tone of your mother's letter that it admits no delay—that is, no unnecessary delay—still Dr.

be too late. Better give this other gentleman yours, Jenkins; he can't keep them both from whistling, though it's likely he may one."

"Will you go, Mr. Blackwood?"

"O, certainly; the spice of danger is always a seasoning I like."

"Come, then."

They entered the prisoner's room preceded by Jenkins.

"Well, Jenkins, have you seen the Governor?"

"Yes, sir, he is particularly engaged and cannot come for at least an hour."

"He sent no apology?"

"Yes, sir, he said he was exceedingly sorry, but Lord Wellington was with him, and he couldn't leave."

"No, no, certainly not. That will do, Jenkins, you may retire. Now, gentlemen, what is your news of the world outside?"

Jenkins left the room and left the door open, with an expressive look at the Doctor.

"I have not much news, Mr. Copeland; you must permit me to introduce a friend, Lieutenant Blackwood, of her Majesty's ship, the Terrible."

"Blackwood! Blackwood! I seem to recollect the name; strange—I cannot recal it—it seems to please me, I have some pleasant sensations at the sound of the name; I seem to know your face, young man, too; let me look at you."

He rose from his seat, and, putting his hand on Blackwood's shoulder, led him to the window and looked into his face earnestly.

"No, no, I am getting old, I cannot recal your face or name. Ah, sir, when you are as old in years and sufferings as I am, you will find your memory getting feeble."

He went back to his seat and sat rocking himself backwards and forwards, evidently trying to recollect something in connection with the name and face of his visitor, but as evidently failing.

"I must give it up. No, I cannot tell. I have been robbed, in this vile place, of all that makes a man—the persecutions I have undergone have affected my mind, I sometimes think; and for what a small offence I am shut up here like a wild beast!"

"What was the nature of the offence, if I might ask such a question?" said the Lieutenant.

"Do you really want to know, Mr. Blackwood? Does he, Doctor?"

"I think so, he is interested. I brought him with me because I thought you'd like to see a new face."

"Let me see, let me see," and he began to stride about the room. "Let me see. Ah! I have it. What am I here for? Is that your question? I will tell you, but first let me close this door. I don't care to have my secrets talked of amongst the herd outside, bond or free."

He tried to shut the door and fasten it, but the keeper had put in action a secret catch that held the lock so that the door though shut, remained unfastened.

"Why am I here? Why have I spent three-and-twenty years in this place? Why have I lost all—everything—hope—love—peace? Ah, why? Do I know? Yes, I do know. I call to mind the day as if it were yesterday, that saw my down-

fall. I am a prisoner here because I know too much. I was a slave of the lamp, I bowed down and worshipped knowledge, and she smiled on me. I knew too much, and too little—too much for those who have confined me—too little for myself. Look at this—this is the secret of my confinement here," and he drew from his breast a piece of paper, which served as the envelope to another, on which was a carefully drawn sketch of some machine. "But for this piece of paper I should be free, I could gain my liberty by its destruction, and yet it is the work of my own hand—every line, every figure is the work of hours and hours passed in toil and labour. Shall I destroy it? No, no,—ten times no!" and he raised his voice as if disputing. "I cannot,—will not; look sir, well—well at it;" and he leant over the lieutenant, who had spread out the paper on the table before him, "You do not understand it. Eh?"

"No, not at all. It's quite a puzzle to me. It's neither ship, nor carriage: I can't tell what it is."

"Ah, man, man, thou hast no faith in thyself, none in thine own power! Where else can we travel than on the earth and on the sea? Is there no type of motion in nature but the fish and the beast?"

"Birds," suggested the lieutenant.

"Birds! True—birds. This, sir, is a bird, created by the human brain!"

"An aerial machine, in fact, Mr. Copeland," said the lieutenant, with a scarcely concealed pity in his smile.

"Yes, spite of your pity, it is; spite of your pity, I said, sir."

He stretched out his right hand like a bird's claw, and continued:

"Look at me. I am not now like a mad man, an enthusiast, an egotist; and yet I tell you that what you smile at in pity to-day will be the ordinary fact of years to come! How simple, how beautiful, are the laws of Nature! How grossly neglectful of her teachings are men. It excites me—me, a philosopher—to think how grossly even the wisest neglect this great book. Ah, young man, I was young once, full of hope and ambition, and now I am here; and all because men have neglected Nature. Man's most ardent aspiration is for power, he envies the swift-footed deer, the agile fish, and tries by imitations of their actions to gain their powers. Does he succeed? No; most assuredly no. And why? But because he will not, in his blindness, learn to distinguish between the essential and the accidental. He takes the bird on the water, and he forms, by imitation, his oars, with all the defects of its intermittent stroke: he forgets that the bird is something more than a swimming machine, it is a living, walking, eating, and egg-hatching machine—the foot serves its purpose towards all these ends, and all well—but man wants, for his purpose, a machine that needs but to serve one end, that of swimming only; the wheel, then, and not the oar, should be his instrument of progression. Whenever man desires progress, the wheel must grant him his desire. They used to represent Fortune as a blind goddess with a wheel, and to

“speak of the ups and downs of life as the results of the turning of this wheel: it is a true figure, but half its meaning is lost without the knowledge that the wheel is the true type of human progress. Fortune comes with her wheel as a gift to benefit all mankind. If I want to express power, material power, that which gives the civilised man the advantage of the barbarian, I must take the wheel as its embodiment.”

He was prowling up and down the apartment with rapid strides as he gave utterance to his thoughts, his hands alternately stretched out, while at intervals he passed them over his brow and eyes, as though some thin veil clouded his inward sight.

“The heavens are full of vast invisible immaterial wheels—suns and planets are but parts of a grand system of wheels—the whole heaven is one vast dial of which men see nothing but the motion of some few bright points, indicators of time—the wheels within wheels of the prophet whose outer circles were so high that they were dreadful—what are they with their eyes, their ceaseless revolutions, but expressions of a divine power? Who reads and knows what Newton has found and thought, and does not feel that these wheels are so high, they are dreadful?”

“Yes, sir, yes, I know that human power over nature, over time, and distance—must be the result of continuous circular motion; by it he shall travel the stormy sea faster than the whale; by it course the land with swifter, surer foot than any of its inhabitants, and by it he shall yet cleave the air with swifter wing than that of any of the fowls of heaven? I know it, sir, I know it. Continuous, circular motion is the key to that secret which Icarus perished in the effort to solve—the key to that problem which has baffled man since the first thought of power dawned upon his mind—I know it, and I am here—here—I, who so loved liberty that I spent a life in seeking wings, am now a poor prisoned captive, more unhappy than any of my feathered prisoners who taught me the secret of their power. I feel sometimes that I shall go mad! Mad! With my misery.”

The Lieutenant glanced at his companion, and their eyes met.

“Quite,” said the doctor, in answer to his look of inquiry.

The prisoner seated himself at the table, and gazed at his sketch.

“Can you explain it to me?” said the Lieutenant. “I really should like to understand it.”

“No, I cannot and will not. I have determined that my secret shall die with me. I could fly, like a bird, if I had but time and liberty. I have made to the government of this country an offer to construct an engine of war so terrible that its possession should insure victory. I am here in consequence. What the eagle is amongst the beasts, that should the nation possessing this become amongst men. I am here! They feared me—unable, unwilling, to aid me in my plans—fearful of my betraying my secrets to enemies, they have placed me here! What were the tyrannies of the Bastille to this? I choke with rage when I think of it! I have sought Death. He

will not come. I must live on and on this weary life. I sometimes think of what I could have done with liberty. I see the crowd around me, gazing with brutish wonder at me and my creation. I see the select few casting to me looks of sympathy and hope. I mount the platform—I set in action the secret springs of life within it. It rises—I rise with it—the crowd gets smaller—the earth sinks beneath me—now, for the critical time—I will to go north or south, against the wind; once more I touch my hidden springs, and steadily, yet swiftly, I move as I will, my triumph is complete! I descend amid the cheers of a convinced multitude, and accept the homage of a grateful nation!”

The old man had risen, and was now standing in an attitude full of dignity, bowing to the multitude his fancy had called up: he turned and saw on the faces of his auditors a smile almost of contempt, certainly of pity.

“Ah! ah! My God! Alas my dreams! I am a captive here! You laugh at me—you laugh!” and he stretched his hands out rapidly, one after the other. “You laugh—and at me! You forget that the eagle has claws and beak as well as wings! You forget, and laugh at me! Thus do I punish the insult.”

With a wild scream he threw himself forward on the doctor's throat, his hand stretched out like the claw of a bird. The doctor had no time to use his whistle, the clutch was so utterly unexpected; his companion, however, whistled shrilly, and the keepers rushing in took him off with some difficulty.

“Now, sir, this won't do. Why can't you let the gentleman alone, eh?” The man spoke as if speaking to a disobedient child.

“He—they both laughed at me—both—,” and the prisoner's eyes glared fiercely on his visitors.

Meantime the doctor had recovered a little composure.

“You'd better go, gentlemen, we shall have all we can do to hold him while you're here.”

They left the room and went to another to wait the arrival of one or the other of the keepers.

“You've upset him for a week, doctor, you have. He seems to have made you a little pale.”

“Yes, he got his hands on my throat.”

“If it hadn't been for my whistle, sir, your friend here would have fared badly.”

“Yes, the attack was so sudden that I feared for his life.”

“Not more than I did,” said the doctor; “however, we're well out of it. What have you done with him?”

“O! he's all right, now, he's got a strait waistcoat on, and strapped to his bed.”

“Was it not rather unwise of you, doctor, to urge seeing him when you heard how he was? Beside, I don't see what you have gained.”

“No, I dare say not. He's a patient of my father's, and he desired me to see him; on my report of his state he will be able to administer to him any medicine he may see necessary. What do you think now of the chains?”

“Still the same; I should like the active fierceness of yonder man we have just left better than the dreadful misery that I saw some suffering.”

They reached the doctor's home, and early next morning the Lieutenant was informed that he could see the old gentleman.

"Are you going out, Mr. Stephen?"

"No, I shall be here an hour or two yet; I may be wanted."

The Lieutenant stood outside the door for awhile, wondering what could be the nature of the communication the old doctor would make to him. He entered the room.

About an hour afterwards the bell was rung violently, and the younger medical man rushed into his father's room.

"Take him away," said the old man, "and bleed him; he has had a slight fit."

CHAPTER IV.

"So Blackwood has exchanged into the Bulldog, and gone off to the West Indies this morning," said the Admiral to his daughters, as they sat at breakfast.

"It's a mistake, papa, surely," said Ellen.

"No, I was told it by one of the dockyard people, who saw him go off in the shore boat, with his chests—What's the matter, Mary? What's the matter with you?"

Mary had nearly fallen from her chair, in a swoon.

"Gone, did you say, papa?" said Ellen.

"Gone, yes, gone, but what's the matter with your sister?"

"There's nothing the matter, papa, nothing—I am quite well, thank you," and in proof of the assertion, she went off into a fit of violent hysterical weeping.

"I'll take care of her, papa; she's ill, I can see."

"Have the doctor then at once."

"No, not yet; let her go into my room."

Her sister took her away, and the old gentleman sat down to his paper, wondering much as to the constitution of woman's mind.

"God bless me, it is not possible she cares for that fellow Blackwood. Now I come to think of it, I did notice that he was here oftener than some of them—I must ask Ellen."

Mary soon recovered, and upon some pretext, Susan was dismissed.

"My dear Mary, what makes you so ill? Tell me, is there more than I know in this? Tell me—your mother—dearest." And Mary, so solicited, told her sister-mother all, how on the evening of the launch he had told her he loved her, and how she had confessed she loved him; and that was only four days ago; and he had neither sent nor written, she had heard nothing of him, and then to hear this, not that he was going, but actually gone, to that dreadful climate, without a word. It was cruel—terribly cruel. Would Ellen see his mother, his sisters—she should die if she did not hear something of him.

Ellen asked her if she had told anyone—yes, she had written to Esther.

What had she said?

Why, she had told her all about it, and about him.

"Why not to me, Mary, eh?"

"I don't know, Ellen, but since you laughed at

me about him, I was afraid you didn't like him and might say something."

"I shall bite my tongue out some day, and then I shall be able to have my sister's confidence," said Ellen, grimly.

"No, dearest, I don't mean that, but I could not bear just then to tell anybody that could say anything about it; it's so different, too, is writing about it."

"There, then, I'll forgive you, child. Now, what do you want me to do?"

"To learn something, dearest. Is it not dreadful for him to have left me like this? If he had only said a word, or written a line, I could have borne it, but now—"

Weep, Mary, weep—tears are the rain that keep cool the heart scorched by the hot sun of agony, and save its seeds of good from utter destruction.

Ellen placed Susan in charge of Mary, with a command not to talk at all, and went to Mrs. Blackwood's at once.

"Mamma is in her room, Miss Newton," said one of the pale young ladies she had seen the day of the launch. "Ellis has only left to-day, and she does not see anyone."

"She will see me I think, if you tell her I wish to see her particularly."

"I don't think so, she has said so positively she is not to be disturbed."

"My dear Miss Blackwood, I must see your mother to-day; before I leave this house, too, if I stay till midnight, I must see her."

Ellen said this in a tone and with an air that left no doubt as to her intention to stay, and began to take off her cloak and bonnet.

"Well, I will do what you ask, and see mamma, but I must say I think it cruel of you to force an interview now, in such grief as hers."

"I mean no offence to your mother, I do not want to pain her, but see her I must and will."

Miss Blackwood left the room, and after a quarter of an hour's absence came back.

"Mamma says it is impossible she should see you, she is so ill and quite unable to bear an interview with any one now."

"I am sorry, too, but I shall and must see her—and alone—my griefs are as great as hers, though they take a different form. See her I will—I will wait her time—stay here all day—but I must see her."

Patience and perseverance carried the day. Ellen, after two hours' waiting, was shown into Mrs. Blackwood's room. She was lying down on the sofa, terribly altered since Ellen had seen her last; her voice was weak and hollow, her eyes sunken and red with weeping.

"I have to apologise for forcing myself upon you now, Mrs. Blackwood, but the matter admits of no delay—you are aware, perhaps, that your son, on Thursday last, proposed to my sister, and was accepted by her?"

"I am."

"Now I ask you, as his mother, do you consider his conduct justifiable in leaving her thus, without a word of any kind, without the slightest explanation? Don't you think it places my sister in a very dreadful position?"

"I do—I pity her from my heart."

"I want something more for her than pity; I want help, and I ask you whether or not you can explain this extraordinary and apparently brutal conduct."

"I cannot—now."

"Now?—If you know anything you are bound to do him justice, and show pity to her by an explanation."

"I cannot."

"Why not?"

"Miss Newton, I am weak and exhausted by grief. I cannot and will not attempt to offer an explanation of my son's conduct; he is responsible, and not I. It is for him to justify himself, not for me."

"You will not then aid me to comfort my sister in any way?"

"I would indeed if I could, but what can I say or do?—he has gone—"

"Did he leave no message, no letter with any one; a note might be lost, do you know—"

"I don't know of any note or letter having been sent."

"Nor left?" And Ellen eyed the lady keenly, as with blushing face and stammering lips she answered the question.

"Nor of any left."

"Your son, then, left with neither you nor his sisters any token, letter, or message of any kind?"

"My son left nothing with either of his sisters."

"Nor with you? You?" said Ellen, eagerly.

"My son left nothing with me that concerns Miss Newton."

"Nothing for her—my sister—Miss Mary Newton?"

"Nothing."

"Then, Madam," said the sister-mother, roused into indignant anger. "I must believe one of two things: either that your son is an unmitigated scoundrel, or that you are giving utterance to a deliberate falsehood. I know him; I do not believe that he could do what you say he has done."

She left the room and went home, and it would have been hard for any spectator could he have seen the two faces side by side that night upon the pillow, to say which was the more unhappy. There was one other face that lay pale and ghastly on its sleepless pillow, and thought and argued the night long.

"What else could I do? Poor girl! poor girl! Yet what could I do? May God forgive me the lie I have told this day, and spare others the misery I now suffer."

CHAPTER V.

"My dearest Ellen, what is the matter with your sister? Richard tells me that she was taken unwell yesterday after hearing the news that Lieutenant Blackwood had sailed. I hope there's nothing serious between them; I hope she's not going to be ill; it would be so inconvenient to put off the marriage now, dearest, would it not. I have all my things ready, and have given my landlady a month's notice."

"It would be very inconvenient to you to have the marriage put off, I believe, Mrs. Lake."

"It would, indeed, my dear; but about Lieutenant Blackwood and your sister, is there—or rather, was there, I ought to say—anything serious between them?"

"So," thought Ellen, "this tattler must come in and learn all, and tear Mary's heart to pieces for her amusement. Not if I know it or can help it," said her heart.

"Whatever there was, Mrs. Lake, is a family matter, and a matter for her family only. You are not yet a member."

"No, but I so soon shall be, dearest, that—"

"Mrs. Lake, when you are a member of our family, you'll have a right to know anything relating to it; till then, I am my own mistress in all matters."

"Oh very well, dearest Ellen," said the lady, with a sweet smile, "I can ask your father."

"Do as you please, Mrs. Lake."

"I mean to now, and, by-and-bye, a little more."

Ellen hated a quarrel, and now she had said her mind retired from contest.

Of course Mrs. Lake heard all that the Admiral knew of his daughter's position, and it was little enough. Ellen would not tell him more, and Mary was silence itself; every reference to the subject drove her to her room in tears, and so it was not often mentioned after the first few days.

The preparations for the wedding filled up their time, and, in due course, Mrs. Lake became the wife of the Admiral; the happy couple went to London while Henry stayed at home with his sisters. He came only the day before the wedding, and it was two days after before he could get a quiet chat with Ellen alone; the younger sisters and the servants had gone to bed, and Ellen and her brother were sitting up, he indulging his student-like habits of smoking and drinking half-and-half; she sitting, looking thoughtfully, at the fire, and stroking the smooth white fur of the purring Winks.

"I say, old lady, what's up with Polly? She's as dull as a mute—quite the Ophelia touch, if she let her hair down."

"She's not well."

"No, I suppose not, or she'd not look like that; has she got a heart complaint, the scarlet fever, or the blue devils,—which? There's a host of blue and red coats about here."

Poor Ellen badly wanted a confidant, and Henry, with all his rough ways and slang expressions, was an old familiar of hers, so she told him all about her sister's disappointment and the treatment she had experienced at the hands of Mr. Blackwood, and ended her narration by breaking down and crying heartily in her brother's arms.

"Oh, I have been half mad, Henry, with that wretched woman coming here, and poor Mary—I've not known what to do with myself, and now that you've come, and I've told you, it is such a relief to my mind, you can't tell."

Henry had lifted Ellen on to his knee, and she sat there twisting his hair about in a reflective, objectless kind of way.

"Poor old girl," said he, kissing her, "poor old girl; and you've been worrying yourself to death, have you, eh? What do you say this fellow's name is?"

"Blackwood."

He took out his little note-book and entered—"Blackwood, first lieutenant."

"What ship?"

"Bull-Dog."

"Jamaica?"

"Yes."

"Lieutenant Blackwood, first lieutenant of the Bull-Dog, at Jamaica. Is that it?"

"Yes; but what are you writing it down for?"

"Only to remember it, that's all. Now find me the list of vessels out of father's study; it's on the table."

"What for? What can you want with it at this time of night?"

"You go and find it, and I'll tell you—that's it, let me see it. Look here, Ellen, the Janus goes to-morrow—"

"Goes to-morrow, Henry; well, what then? I am sleepy and stupid, or else you are."

"Not at all, sister, not at all. The case lies in a nut-shell; this Blackwood grossly insults my sister by his silence; I feel it my duty to open his mouth. He's in Jamaica—I'm here; he can't come home, so I must go to him."

"Open his mouth?"

"Yes, dear, I have read that in cases of lock-jaw of this kind, a quarter of an ounce of lead exhibited from the muzzle of a pistol, at twelve paces distance, is a good remedy. I have also heard that the rapid motion of two feet six of polished steel before the person of the patient has been found efficacious, but that is almost entirely a foreign practice. My patient will have his choice of the treatment."

"You don't mean to fight him, Henry?" said Ellen, her face deadly pale.

"Exactly, my dear sister. Does this scoundrel suppose that, because my father's an old man, he's to play tricks with my sisters? He'll hold a very different opinion before long, if I know anything of hair-triggers or small sword."

"You must not—indeed you must not—go, Henry. If he should kill you, what should we do?"

"My dear, he'll not kill me; perhaps I shall kill him. There, now, don't say another word; get my things ready at once. I'm off the first thing in the morning. I can get a passage over on board the Janus. Now, don't go yet, Ellen; promise me not to tell the girls till I'm gone, and then don't say what I've gone for. I have gone to see him, you understand!"

"I understand well enough, Henry, but you must not go. You will kill me if you do." She came up to him, laid her hand on his arm and repeated, "You will kill me if you go."

"Kill you, Ellen! What do you mean, now? Is your sister's honour nothing to you—her sufferings nothing? I shall kill myself if I stop. I'll hunt this fellow down as I would a wild beast, and he is nothing better to treat a girl in this way."

"Henry, he's no wild beast. He has done what is right; I know he is incapable of a base action. His mother has some message for Mary, I feel convinced. He is not to blame."

"Why, Ellen, you surprise me, to have you defend a man thus, who has put this slight upon your family!"

"I do assure you that I know Mr. Blackwood is incapable of any action unbecoming a gentleman. His mother is in fault; you shall see her, and make her confess it."

"We can't make women do anything, Ellen. I will, if you like, see her, and ask her again if she has any letter or message from him to Mary: if she has, and will give it up, and the explanation it offers is satisfactory, I will not go. If she will not give it up, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, I shall go. The Janus leaves in the morning, I may overtake her in one of the sloops, if I start before night. But tell me one thing, Ellen, what makes you so pale?—what makes you wish me not to go? Why do you defend a person such as this, who has wronged your pet, Mary? Why, eh? Come, tell me, Ellen." He was holding both her hands, and reading her face as he asked these questions half-playfully, half-seriously, "Ellen, Ellen, I say, what ails you?" She had sunk upon his breast, and was weeping hysterically.

"Ellen do you—it is possible that you care for—that you loved this man! My God! what a scoundrel he is—two of my sis—"

She started up from him as if stung.

"No, Henry, no; you wrong him—you wrong me. He's no scoundrel—he is the truest gentleman I ever saw. I never heard a word from his lips that might pain any one, his actions are gentleness itself; and I am assured he has some good motive in thus leaving. Indeed you wrong him."

"If I wrong him, what shall I think of you, sister Ellen?" said her brother, sternly.

"I do not care what you think. He has never breathed to me a word that any woman might not have heard from her friend, he has never talked of love to me; but he alone, of the men I have seen in my father's house, treated me as a reasonable being,—as one possessed of soul and sympathies. I know I have not personal beauty like Mary, and I always felt it when with other men; but, with him, I never felt the want of it,—never longed for it."

"You love this man?"

"I do—I am not ashamed—he realises all the dreams of my girlhood, and I am not ashamed to love so noble a man. Henry, I have loved you—been a mother to you as a boy—a sister, a friend. I know you love me, you know how much I love you, and yet I tell you that much as I love you, I fear his fall as much as yours if you should meet."

"And this man was engaged to my sister! Pity me, my God!—pity me!"

"Pity me, Henry—pity me! You will not tell my secret—you will not shame me? My God! what shall I do? Oh, Henry! pity me—say you will not betray me, for God's sake!"

"My poor dear sister, you should know me better. I could not betray you, I pity you from

my soul. Come, dearest, let me take you to your room."

He led her, exhausted and unresisting, away, and, stopping at her door, kissed her tenderly.

"Your secret is safe with me, Ellen."

"You will not go without seeing me? Promise it—you will see his mother, and let me know what she says. You will, Henry?"

"I will, Nelly—so good night, sister."

When Henry returned from Mrs. Blackwood's, he found the sisters had changed places. Mary was nurse, and Ellen was the patient; the violent emotions of the preceding evening and the previous exhaustion had made her seriously ill, so ill that she could not leave her room, and thither Henry went to relate the result of his interview with Mrs. Blackwood.

"I want to talk to Henry a little, Mary."

"Not much, dear; the doctor said it was bad for you. I shan't let you have more than ten minutes."

"What did she say?" asked Ellen, eagerly.

"Lie down, then, like a good girl, and I'll tell you."

"There now—what?"

"She has no message, packet, or letter of any kind."

"And you believe her?"

"No; but what can I do? She would not see me at first, but I insisted, and she said as decidedly as she could that she had nothing. I said that I should proceed to Jamaica and demand an explanation—she knew what I meant, for she turned ghastly pale, and muttered 'God help me!' and then she turned to me and said, as if driven to desperation, 'You must do as you please, sir; my son left nothing with me for Miss Newton.' I did not believe her, still I could but go, and as I went I heard her mutter, 'God be merciful to my poor Ellis!' I'm puzzled to know what it all means."

"You don't believe, then, that he went without leaving some explanation, Henry? You don't believe what his mother said?"

"I do not, Ellen; still I can't do anything but go now."

"Promise me one thing, Henry—only one thing."

"Well?"

"You won't— You will try and get from him an explanation without violence? You will treat him—"

"I will treat him, Ellen, as a gentleman. He must deserve this, or he would not have won your love."

"And you'll not betray me?"

"Quite safe, Ellen," and he touched his heart.

"Can't you wait till father comes? Can't you write to him?"

"Neither, Ellen; I should lose the Janus, and have to wait a fortnight more. No; I'm off this evening; you can tell one of the servants where to find my things. So, good-bye, old lady!"

How she held him in her arms, and looked into his eyes eagerly, as if to read whether it was possible that the brother she loved so much would bring death to the man she loved yet more. He left her at last, and it is hardly to be wondered at

that when the doctor came, an hour after Henry's departure that evening, he pronounced the fever considerably heightened, and blamed them for having suffered her to see her brother.

How little the good old man who stood by her bedside knew of the cause of that flushed face and those muttered words.

But of all illnesses there is an end, one way or another: either death comes and kindly takes the burden from the sufferer's back, or else he is driven off and health binds another burden but the firmer.

Ellen recovered. She was young, strong, and had a strong will, and recovered—how much rather she would have died she alone knew. She was quite well now, rather more grim, and fonder of Winks than ever.

The newly married couple came home, and Mrs. Newton's peculiar genius for economising speedily developed itself.

"You know, my dear," she said to Ellen, "your father is not a young man; to insure his life would be a great expense, and besides he's stout, and has rather a tendency to apoplexy, I think, so that it is my duty to make some provision for myself in case anything should happen. Now, I really think that we might do with one less servant; that maid of yours is rather impertinent and not much use, so I gave her notice yesterday."

"You gave her a month's warning, Mrs. Newton! And without consulting me?" said the astonished Ellen. "Dismiss *my* servants!"

"O! no, dear, not *your* servants—*my* servants."

"I shall speak to my father immediately."

"Do, my dearest Ellen; he will, I am sure, agree with me."

What chance had poor Ellen, or her sisters, against this new mother, who had, from twelve o'clock at night till eight o'clock in the morning, to mould the easy Mr. Newton to her views, while half an hour at dinner was all they could obtain, and then not alone. So their maid went, and the girls dressed each other, and wondered what next.

They didn't wait long. A fly drove up to the door one day about a week after the servant's dismissal, and out of it came a stout, elderly lady and a young gentleman with red hair, a violent pug nose, and a face terribly covered with freckles.

"What now?" said Mary at the window. "I suppose it's Fanny's mother come to ask why she's to go."

"It hardly looks like it. There's another cab with boxes behind, and all of them are being carried into the hall. I must go and see what it means."

"O! my dearest Ellen, I'm so glad you're come out. This is my mamma, and this my brother," said the newly made wife. "She's going to stay with me a little while."

"How do you do, Miss?" said the stout lady, Mrs. Bates, "I hope I see you well—I'm charmed to see my daughter's new home. Have you any silver, Catherine dear? this man's waiting to be paid."

"Dear me! I have none. Perhaps, Ellen, dearest, you have—will you lend me some?"

Ellen paid the man his fare, and then ushered them into the dining-room.

"That is Susan, mother, and the other is poor Mary."

"Glad to see you, Miss," said Mrs. Bates to Susan, "and you, too, my dear Miss Mary. I've heard of that unfortunate affair of Mr. Blackwood, my dear, you have my sympathy. I was twice served in that way before I married Mr. Bates, my dear."

"Now, Ellen, dear, which room can mamma have while she stays? I think that the room you girls sleep in now would be the best, and then Charley could have the little dressing closet that leads out of it, you know."

"There is the spare room."

"That I use as a dressing-room, Ellen, dear."

But why waste my readers' patience—have not the sorrows of Lovell been written by a great master? It is enough. Admiral Newton married Mrs. Lake, and Mrs. Lake's mamma and her brother lived in the house—what need to say how the monthly dinner became bi-monthly, and with Mrs. Bates at the table—then a tri-monthly dinner, and then disappeared from the list of feasts altogether. What need to relate that out of the savings of the Admiral's household expenses Master Bates was sent to a most expensive classical academy? What need to say that the two girls endured all that two high-spirited girls could endure under the reign of such tyrants, and only waited for the arrival of their brother to discuss some plan by which to escape an existence only endured so long as there was hope of its coming to a speedy end.

They watched and waited for Henry, and Henry at last came, and they felt when they saw his sunburnt face at the door, that the time of their deliverance was at hand.

(To be continued.)

THE ADMIRAL'S DAUGHTERS.

A STORY OF FIFTY YEARS AGO, IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. BY A. STEWART HARRISON



CHAPTER VI.

HE had news—some good—some bad—he would see Ellen alone.

"But do tell me one thing," said Mary, "you found him well? Alive? You surely have something to tell me."

"I found him alive, Mary, and what I have to tell, Ellen shall tell you." And with a sad heart Mary left them.

"You found him alive, Henry. He is not alive now? I know it—I saw it in your face, when you told Mary so." And Ellen heaved a great sigh, and, as far as human hearts can break, her heart was broken then. She was rigid as a stone—her heart was dead. No tears—no groans—only an impatient weariness of the thought that she must live. Her love had died, and without a tear she buried him in her heart.

"Yes, Ellen, he is dead. He was, as you said, as fine a fellow as ever breathed; I heard nothing but good of him while in the Island or on board. He was down with the fever when I got there, and forbidden to see anyone. I told the physician attending him I wanted to see him in a case of

life and death, and would not permit myself a moment longer than was necessary. He seemed vexed at my persistence, and said he would let me know next day. I called, and he gave me leave, and told me his fate was sealed—he must die. I went to his lodgings, saw him, and told him who I was; he felt for my hand and took it.

"She sent you—God bless her! Poor Mary!"

"No," I said, "she only knew I was coming after I started. I came here to ask some explanation of your leaving as you did."

"He rose up in the bed with a wild, surprised look, and said:

"She does not know? Explanation? Oh, my God! Mother, what have you done? You have killed me! I left a letter with my mother to give her, it explains all."

"She has not had it—your mother denies it—she says she has no letter. Tell me what the letter contained."

"He looked at me, as if recovering from a trance—

"Mother! Oh, mother! mother!"

"I beseech you, sir, tell me what shall I say

to my sister whose happiness you have blighted—I meant to force you to do it had I found you well—finding you thus, I entreat you, let me know.”

“He sank down on the bed, still muttering ‘Oh mother, mother! Poor Mary! Mother, you have killed my poor Mary!’”

“It was very painful for me; I could see he had not another hour’s life in him, but yet I must force him to an explanation.

“‘I do entreat you, Mr. Blackwood, tell me what the letter contained, as explanation of your conduct.’”

“He was too far gone—he could only murmur. I called the people in, and gave him a restorative, and stood there by his bed-side, watching for some gleam of consciousness for nearly half an hour; then he seemed to revive, and looked at me as if I were quite a stranger. I saw this was the only chance; I asked him once more to tell me what was in the letter he had left with his mother—that I was Mary’s brother.

“‘She must forgive me—you forgive me for her. I could not but believe she forgives and pities me now that she knows all.’”

“‘She knows nothing—your mother denied having any letter for her.’”

“‘You said that before, just now—didn’t you? I am dying—I know it—I feel it. Tell your sister I could not marry her—I have never ceased to love her.’”

“‘Why not? For God’s sake tell me, or she will break her heart.’”

“He paused a moment, and then said:

“‘Because my—’ Here he broke down altogether, and sank back as if dead. I supported him, and poured some cordial down his throat. He rallied, looked at me, and found strength enough to murmur ‘The letter—’ and then was gone. I’ve seen this kind of thing at the hospitals pretty frequently, but I can tell you, Ellen, this upset me quite—to be balked and disappointed after all this time, and be referred to that lying mother of his again; it was too much for me—I felt rash, drank too much, and was ill myself; that’s the reason you had no letters. I cut off a piece of his hair for Mary, and I must get you to give it her—I can’t tell her all this.”

Henry had forgotten, or thought little of the feelings of the sister who sat with a face of stone listening to him. He gave her the hair in a paper, and Ellen said:

“Mary shall have *some*.”

“Some, Ellen?—I’m sorry, I forgot.”

“That’s right, Henry. Do forget what it is not good for either of us to remember.”

Mary heard the news of her lover’s death and was grieved bitterly by it; she had the portion of hair that Ellen gave her made into a brooch, and wore it constantly. The portion that remained with Ellen, none ever saw, or knew what became of it.

Henry soon saw the state of affairs at his father’s; there was no room for him, Mr. Charles Bates had been put into his room, and he must sleep at the hotel, said Mrs. Newton and Mrs. Bates, and, as a result, said Mr. Newton.

There was a violent explosion between Mr. Henry Newton and his worthy step-mamma, and

he left the house, swearing never to return to it, an oath which Mrs. Bates was not at all sorry to hear uttered, and only hoped might be kept.

Henry saw his sisters before he left, and said, if they would trust to him, he had a plan by which they might all live together in London; but that they must wait, it was not yet perfected.

They waited, and at last came the news that Henry had married a West Indian lady with a large fortune, whom he had met on board the vessel in which he came over; he and his newly made wife invited them all to go and live with them; but Ellen was doubtful about the wisdom of the plan, it would be such a tax on Henry. The fact that such a proposal had been made, soon came to the ears of Mrs. Newton; it was too advantageous a scheme to be lost by Ellen’s scruples, and persecutions of all kinds were redoubled: all the little, petty tyrannies that a merciless woman in authority can exercise over other women of finer feelings than herself were then put in force to drive them from their father’s house. Yet they would not go; rather than burden their brother, they would stay where they had a right to stay.

“They would stay, would they?” said Mrs. Bates—not if she knew anything, should they stay another week—that Ellen should go, and Mary should go—Susan was a poor little fool, and she might stay. If Ellen went Mary would go—how could Ellen be driven out? She who was stone itself to all their taunts, who seemed to their eyes, to live above their power,—perhaps Mary could have told them, Ellen was not the stoic with her she was to them. She must go—she must have one point where she was sensitive. Mary was always in hand, the mention of Lieutenant Blackwood, vanquished poor Mary at once; but Ellen still stern and grim, she could not be driven out, she had no weak and assailable points—none—none. Yes, there was one—that should be tried—and the three conspirators held a conclave, and acted.

The Admiral sat in the dining-room, sipping his coffee, and reading the paper, as was his habit, Mrs. Newton sat at the head of the table dispensing the coffee, Mrs. Bates sat near the bread and butter, and cut well-buttered slices for herself and her children, and very meagre equivalents for the two girls, Mary and Susan, in Ellen’s reign the servants prepared a wholesome, plenteous breakfast; now, bread and butter and coffee alone could secure peace, and they alone were there. Most of the old servants had gone, but those who remained said: “The house *used* to be kept as a gentleman’s should be, but now—” and they shook their heads at the change.

So the family sat one morning, about a month after Henry’s proposal had been first made.

The door opened suddenly, and Ellen entered with a wild, dry eye, and in her arms, a dirty, black-looking burden.

“Look here, Papa—”

“Why, Ellen, what is it? Not poor old Winks? Don’t say that, Ellen!”

“It is, father—my poor old friend—poor old

Winks," she murmured, caressingly, to the burden in her arms.

"What does it mean? Where did you find him?"

"It means, father, that this lady's son has brutally killed it. Brutally! Cruelly! Look at its poor limbs, shockingly contorted. Oh, it was brutal, when death might have come so painlessly by other poisons, to choose this to kill him! Arsenic, father; they gave it in his food, and shut him up in the outhouse. I missed him last night, and looked for him everywhere, and the girls brought him in this morning. Poor old Winks!" and the woman who had not shed a tear before her enemy till now, wept to see her old playfellow dead.

"Mrs. Newton, did you know of this? Was this done by your orders?" said the father, now fairly roused.

"Really, Mr. Newton, I am not disposed to answer a question put in that tone."

"No, my dear Kate, don't answer him."

"Hold your tongue, madam!" thundered the Admiral, in a tone that showed he had too often spoken with authority to be disobeyed now.

"Mrs. Newton, did you know of this? Was it done by your orders?"

"Yes, sir, it was. I considered that it was a very bad habit of Ellen's, allowing a cat in the bed-room, and I determined not to permit it. I'm sure nobody wanted the brute here."

"I think so too," muttered Ellen. Perhaps they did not mean the same animal.

"Mrs. Newton," said the Admiral, "that 'brute,' as you call it, was one of the first presents my wife gave to her daughter Ellen. I saw her put it into the child's arms when she was but ten years old, and this poor 'brute' a pretty kitten. It has been her companion, day and night, for now these many years. You may despise the love that such long years cause between a woman and a 'brute'; I do not. I have, madam, made a mistake in taking you to occupy the post you do. I have watched your conduct to my daughters, hoping it would mend; this act of most barbarous cruelty has killed my emotions of respect or affection for you. We are husband and wife, henceforth, only in name."

He rang the bell, and when the servant came, said:

"Jane, go to your mistress's room, collect all my clothes, and take them to Mr. Henry's room; remove those of Mr. Bates, and take your orders from your mistress where to put them. Madam, I will send my solicitor to you, to make arrangements about the household expenses." And the old gentleman left the room, but not before Ellen had put her arms round his neck, kissed him, and said,

"Now you are my father again."

Ellen washed her poor pet, and buried him; and many a human being has sunk into a grave over which fewer tears have been shed. A few years make us fond of pets, and the heart of a child is very tender. What wonder the woman weeps to find that old companion gone? Fare thee well, poor old Winks! I cannot despise thy mistress

for loving thee, and weeping at thy death, though thou wert even but a "brute."

Mrs. Bates had gained her end, for Ellen and Mary left their father's house to live with their brother in London.

CHAPTER VII.

I MUST now pass over twenty years, of which I have little record, for this story is founded on facts. Henry is a stout and well-to-do general practitioner in London; his wife has been dead some few years. Mary is the comely wife of a tradesman in easy circumstances. Susan, after living with her father and his tyrants, who had regained their power, some few years, had died of an affection of the throat, aggravated by neglect and the economy of Mrs. Bates. Admiral Newton died about four years before this time, and his wife, within six months, became a bride for the third time, Major Simpkins being the happy man:—report says that Mrs. Bates does not visit the major, and that that gentleman is master in his own house. Ellen is housekeeper in a nobleman's family, and dines in state, with a footman at her back,—grim, stern, and harder than ever is Ellen.

Henry had a habit of frequenting the Cheshire Cheese, in Fleet Street, for my story is of the days when men did go to those quiet little city taverns to spend their evenings, instead of flying down to Brighton, when their business was done. One evening, upon going in, he was immediately accosted by a fellow surgeon,

"Here, look, Newton! there's an advertisement for some of your people in the Times. Something to their advantage."

He took the Times, and read,

IF MISS MARY NEWTON, who left Plymouth in 1811, will communicate with Messrs. Harrild & Co. she will hear of something to her advantage.

"That's your sister, Mrs. Coulson, isn't it, Newton?"

"I don't know; she was Mary Newton, of Plymouth; still, there may be another Mary of the same name and place."

"You'll see them, of course."

"O yes, I'll see them before I see her, and so save her disappointment."

Henry called at the solicitor's, and there found that his sister was the person intended, and taking her there next day was informed, that the sum of 10,000*l.* in the Three Per Cents. had reverted to her through the death of Mrs. Blackwood.

"This packet, madam, was placed by that lady in my hands for delivery, and as soon as the necessary documents are drawn up the money shall be transferred to you."

Mary took the packet and the news home to her astonished husband. The packet contained two letters, one old and creased, the other evidently but lately written.

The letters occupied but a small portion of Mr. Coulson's attention; he was a thorough tradesman, and this accession to his capital set him scheming for success in his efforts to increase it. Mary took the letters to her room, and, while watching in its cradle the slumbers of another man's child, read the old, creased, and faded letter

of her dead lover with almost a feeling of guilt when she found it addressed to her as "My dearest Mary."

It ran as follows :

MY DEAREST MARY,—I must entreat you to remember while reading this strange letter that I have not ceased to love you—as long as I live I never shall. If you should find it in your heart to blame me for thus quitting you, and so soon after I had sworn I loved you more than life, let this sad story be my excuse, at least, in your loving eyes.

I left you, Mary, on the night of the launch, my heart full of happiness, my mind busy forming pictures of what might be in our happy future. I found my mother up, and she told me you would never be my wife. In vain I pressed her to say why. She would not herself, but gave me a letter to her agent. I went with a person he selected to Bethlehem Hospital, and saw my friend's life nearly sacrificed to the violence of one of the inmates. I saw the father of my new friend, and found that he could answer the question I had put to my mother.

He was an old man, and had been the family doctor for years, and his father before him. He gave me the history of my family, and told me that my grandfather had committed suicide in a paroxysm of madness, having previously nearly strangled my grandmother, and believing her dead. He went on to say that madness ran in our blood, that two of the three of my father's brothers had died in close confinement, raging madmen, and that I had been trained to the sea in order that the active bodily exercise might save me from the temptation to over-study which had generally preceded the outbreaks in the other cases. He implored me not to marry, assuring me that if I did I must subject any woman who became my wife to the most awful of lives—that of alliance with a person whose reason might desert him at any moment, and the additional horror of the risk of her children being similarly afflicted.

He told me I might possibly escape, if I continued my present habits of active exercise, but that he could hardly answer for it. He told me, further, that this knowledge had been kept from me for fear it might produce the very result it was so desirable to avoid. He urged me until I promised him that I would not marry without informing you of this fact, and he said that if I did marry he should lose any feeling of respect he had entertained for me.

I could not tell you this, and then ask you to be my wife—I could only be happy in the grave.

As I was leaving him, almost stunned with the thought of the horrible future he had pointed out, I exclaimed :

"I would to God I had been like my father, and by an early death escaped this misery of life."

"Your father has not escaped, Mr. Blackwood," said he.

"Not escaped?" I said. "Not dead?"

"No, sir, not dead! the maniac whom you saw yesterday attempting my son's life, and who now lies chained to his bed, is your father."

I knew no more after this, till I found myself on the sofa in his room with the blood flowing from my arm.

I left as soon as possible, and reached this place last evening. I changed into another vessel, and before you have this from my mother's hand I shall be on my way to a climate which may be an early messenger of God's mercy to me.

Mary, dearest Mary, was it not better that I should leave thus and not subject myself to the temptation of robbing you of all happiness in this world by concealment of my newly-discovered hereditary malady?

Mary, I know I am forgiven. I feel your heart will approve my conduct. I shall never cease to love you while I have life. May God bless you, and make you as happy as I once hoped to have been able to make you.

Farewell, dearest! Once more farewell from your own
ELLIS.

She read it through once, and again, and sat lost in thought for a long time, and then, looking down at her youngest, who lay asleep at her feet, caught it impulsively in her arms, and exclaimed :

"Poor Ellis! Thank God we escaped this misery."

There was still the letter from Mrs. Blackwood, and she laid the child down, and once more, with the unwearied foot of motherhood, rocked it to sleep, as she read—

MY DEAR MISS BLACKWOOD,—Let me now, thus late, attempt to make some reparation for the wrong I have done you in retaining the enclosed letter.

Mine is a sad story. I do not justify myself, I only seek to extenuate what must appear an act of wanton brutality on my part, to say nothing of the want of honour involved.

At sixteen I was married to the father of Ellis, a man of sweet disposition and gentle manners, against whose character I never had heard a word. My father and mother were people who had succeeded in business, and who thought their money would surely bring me a husband of good family. Mr. Blackwood's offer was accepted, and I married him.

For the first few years of my married life I was as happy as it is possible for any human being to be: this happiness lasted till the birth of my last child—I had then three, Ellis and two girls.

After this time my husband gradually changed. He became addicted to study; for days together I saw nothing of him—he and his assistants were locked in night and day in a part of the house to which I was forbidden to go. He began, too, to talk strangely of man's power over nature, and scarcely ever slept: his look grew wild and his temper dreadfully irritable. I consulted an old friend of my father's, who was also his solicitor, and he recommended me to see the doctor who had attended my husband's family. I saw him (Dr. Stephen) and he told me that I must be careful not to cross my husband, and that the family were subject to attacks of mental weakness.

One evening after this, I went to my husband's door, and entreated him to let me in to see him. He said, in an hour I might come. I went again, and he came out and clasped me in his arms and said :

"Now, like Archimedes, I can exclaim 'Eureka!' Look, my wife, look here!"

He drew me into the study, and showed me on the table a drawing of some machine.

"There!" said he, "that is my bird; in it you and I will skim the air like swallows, gaze upon the sun like eagles, and fly from clime to clime at will! That sketch, Caroline, is a mint—a Golconda—and shall make your husband's name last longer than the pyramids!"

I laughed, I could not help it, to hear him talk of flying in that way. That laugh cost me my happiness. I have never laughed since. In one moment he had caught me by the throat, and was strangling me. I screamed, and remembered no more till I found myself in bed, and Dr. Stephen at the bedside. He told me that the servants had rescued me after a great difficulty, that the groom was seriously injured by a hammer my husband had used to defend himself, and that my husband was then strapped down to a bed—a madman!

I then heard that the malady was hereditary, that none of the female members of the family had been so afflicted, but that nearly all the males had died violent deaths.

I consulted Mr. Harrild and Dr. Stephen, and for six months everything that could be thought of was done for my husband's benefit, without avail. At last I was advised to send him to Bethlehem Hospital, in London, Dr. Stephen promising to see him often, and let me know his condition.

I broke up my establishment, removed to another part of the country, gave out that I was a widow, and told my children that their father was dead. In a few years there were only myself and the doctor and the solicitor aware of my husband's existence, as an incurable madman in Bethlehem under the name of Copeland. Ellis was sent to sea, and I hoped, and fondly hoped, that he would escape the knowledge of the secret of his father's state.

No words can paint my horror, when that night of the launch he told me he was affianced to you. I could not—for his own, for your sake—suffer him to marry. I sent him to London, with a request to Dr. Stephen to show him his father, and break the matter to him. It was done; my son came back to me changed. Hope was dead in his heart—he longed for death himself, and I could not but feel with him. He left me to go to Jamaica—I would rather have seen him dead than in his father's condition. He went. Before he left he gave me this letter to give to you, asking me to break to you, as gently as might be, this dreadful news. He left it unsealed, I read it, and the temptation to keep my secret was too much for me. If you knew it, you would have told your sister; she others; and my girls, would have known they were the children of a madman. I struggled with my conscience—I lied—I said I had no letter.

I could not be robbed of everything. My son was dead to me already—my husband worse than dead. I had but my two girls, I could not lose them,—see them different from what they were,—I could not convict myself of lying to those who loved and trusted me so much. I argued what good would it do you to know.

It is enough. I did deny the possession of this letter for all these reasons; if I have sinned, I have suffered punishment.

When your brother came to me, after his return from Jamaica, and told me of my son's death, I lied yet once more. It was too much to bear that I should lose everything through you. My son was dead. My conscience, seared by previous denials, was less sensitive now, and I lied to him again. Desolate as I was, I found my only comfort in the society of my daughters and my hopes of their happiness. Alas! how vain our wishes and hopes are! As though my crime had blighted them they withered. The news of their brother's death proved too much for my delicate Agnes, and before six months had passed I was once more mourning for one of my children. I had but one now,—we lived in each other. Often have I lain awake reflecting what might be the effect of my telling her my secret. I fancied I saw her turn away from me, horror-stricken at my duplicity. I could not trust any one with my last grains of happiness—I could not tell any one, for it might reach her, and so blight my love once more.

I do not say this was right, I only ask pity for the weakness. She was always delicate and ailing, required the most watchful attention, and for years she had all the care a mother could bestow, and yet she sickened more and more. I could see her grow weaker day by day, and each day saw us closer. At last she sank and died, and with her died out my last hopes of

happiness of any kind in this world. Robbed of her, I turned to my husband, and, on several occasions, saw him. The sound of my voice drove him into the wildest paroxysms of rage, and Dr. Stephen advised me to leave him where he was. I did so, and for the last ten years have been a desolate, solitary woman.

My hour is come now, I am leaving this world. I look back over my life with pain; I see many, many faults that I might have avoided committing; but chief amongst them rises this that I have done in reference to my son and yourself.

I have, for twenty years, allowed his name to be blackened by all who knew of his supposed treatment of you; to you I have been cruel indeed,—I admit it. I pray your forgiveness—as I do my Maker's—for this sin. Forgive, as you hope to be forgiven, one who has lived in much pain and suffered so much, that she is glad that death is at last so near to relieve her.

Yours,

CAROLINE BLACKWOOD.

The will left by my son, in my hands, will be placed with this letter in the hands of Mr. Harrild. My son said he should leave you all he had in reversion after myself and his sisters, if they were unmarried. Once more, Mary Newton, forgive me for the wrong I have done you.

C. B.

Mary read the letter through, and found in it a slip of paper evidently put in as an afterthought.

"My son left this ring with me to give to your sister Ellen, as a token of his sincere friendship. Will you, please, let her have it, should she be alive now."

She put them all together, ring and letters, in her drawer, and went down to her husband, and asked him if he would like to see the letters, in a tone which ladies can so well assume, and which tells you without words that it would be the greatest offence you could commit to accept the offer made. Mr. Coulson was a well-drilled husband, seventeen years training teach a man to understand a woman's voice as well as her words, and he replied at once:

"No, I don't care about seeing them. There's nothing in them, I suppose?"

"Not much," said Mary, and there ceased all reference on his part to the subject. The money became Mr. Coulson's especial care, and he was successful enough to retire, after a few years, to Clapham, where in the isolated and dignified retirement peculiar to that place, he spent the remainder of his days.

And Ellen?

The letters were taken to Ellen to read, and were never returned. The ring, once on her finger, never came off again.

She called soon after on Doctor Stephen the younger, and with him proceeded to the New Bethlehem hospital on the Surrey side of the Thames, for the old one was gone and its inmates removed to their new home. There she saw the father of him who had been her life's one love, and after a few days spent in attendance on him, gained so much influence over the old man, now enfeebled by age and more tractable, that she obtained the doctor's leave to remove him to the sea-side; and there, renting a cottage, she and the feeble-minded old gentleman lived together.

He was still fond of drawing wheels on paper, and had numbers of birds of all kinds in a large

covered space at the back of the house ; but his violence was quite gone, and when he was departing for that other world, where, perhaps, the powers of which he dreamed would be his without the cumbrous machinery, by which alone in this life he could have attained them, he became conscious and heard his own story from her lips ; and, with his hand in hers, blessed her for his last years of happiness and freedom, and so passed away.

He was buried in the quiet little churchyard of the place, and then Ellen was once more a stone. Her nephews and nieces came to see her, and wondered whether it was a true report they heard occasionally, in the village, that their Aunt Ellen was the lady who had taken an old man out of Bedlam, and had nursed him till he died.

(Concluded.)